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MEMORANDUM FOR: Chief, Information Handling Task Force

FROM: Clifford D. May, Jr.
Acting Deputy Director for Administration

SUBJECT: Information Handling Goals

REFERENCE: Undated Memorandum for Mr. Wortman;
Subject: Information Handling Goals -
Meeting with DDCI

1. As requested in the referenced memorandum, I have reviewed your preliminary set of information handling goals. I have also had several of my office and staff elements review the same goals. This memorandum is a summary of our collective thoughts.

2. Our primary concern revolves around the timing and manner with which these goals will be promulgated. We all recall the original EXCOM Charter that established your task force and the terms of reference that were approved to guide your efforts. In quoting from these terms of reference:

"The primary product of the study will be a strategic plan covering the next ten-year period, addressing provision and use of information sources. The strategic plan will establish goals and priorities, speak to resources required to address these goals, and set policy governing acquisition, use, and disposition of resources. The structure of the plan will be such that subsequent planning for implementation can be delegated to lower levels....."

The Information Handling Task Force (IHTF) is barely two months into an approved twelve month study. I don't understand why, at this point in the effort, it is to anyone's advantage to promulgate a formal set of information handling goals. If the goals that you propose are approved and proclaimed now, before completion of the study, we risk blunting their impact and signalling to the Agency at large that we have accomplished what we set out to do. In fact, we will have produced only one, and perhaps the simplest, of the results we sought. A second danger in promulgating goals at this early point in your effort, it seems to me, is the possibility that we may lose control over the way we address as yet unresolved issues implicit in your goals.

Heated Executive Committee debate could lead to the premature adoption of information handling policies which if dealt with in a more orderly fashion, might be shown to be less than optimal.

3. In sum, I see no benefit and serious risks to promulgating Agency information handling goals now. The entire matter of implementing these goals in some rational and coherent fashion is as yet unaddressed. This Agency has had a lot of goals before. If we have failed in achieving some of these -- and we have -- it has in large part been because we haven't always agreed on how and when to achieve the goals, at what cost, and for whose primary benefit. These are all parts of a coordinated thoughtful Agency-level implementation plan, and we don't have any of these plans sorted out, discussed, debated, and reflected-upon as yet. Lest you feel that I want to slow down the IHIF effort, let's remember that some of us were in the forefront of your current study. Your effort is critical to the Agency's well-being and it is for precisely this reason that it should be allowed to run its full course. The Agency is, I think, best served if we deal with information handling goals and the policies, priorities, and resources required to implement them in one coherent fashion.

4. As I indicated initially, we are not so concerned with the substance of your proposed goals as we are with the timing of your proposal. Turning to the specifics of your goals, we think the hierarchical linking of individual goals makes good sense. The low-numbered goals are clearly uncontestable motherhood statements from which the balance of goals are built. Some specific comments on these goals are:

a. Goal 5 - I wish I shared the Task Force's apparent belief that we have an existing "sense of community" at Headquarters. I suggest that we admit, in our statement of the goal, that we have some work to do to create such a sense, even at Headquarters.

b. Goal 18 - "The movement of information by means of paper" can indeed involve security risk, but we should not imply that other media are free of such risk.

c. Goal 19 - ODP is skeptical about ever achieving a "single, universal network of user terminals." Even if feasible, compartmentation will dictate a degree of insulation for some systems, denying the possibility (or desirability) of achieving universality.

d. Goal 23 - When we come to implement this goal, we should not be seduced by the idea that one solution can meet the needs of all managers. The "better means" to be sought must be adaptable to the diverse needs of different managers with disparate problems.

e. Goal 24 - This goal unduly preconditions the implementing steps which may follow. Developments in miniaturized and low-cost hardware may offer alternatives to multi-level access. Our general goal should be to solve the problem of effective compartmentation of sensitive data.

f. Goal 29 - Here reference is made to conflicts between goals "because of their resource implications." Some of the conflicts, for example the one between improved access and enhanced security, are more substantive than economic, though the solutions to the conflict may be costly. This part of this goal needs restating.

/s/ C. D. May

Clifford D. May, Jr.

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